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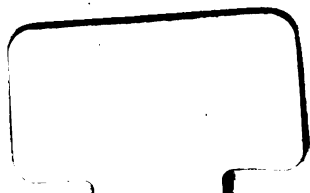
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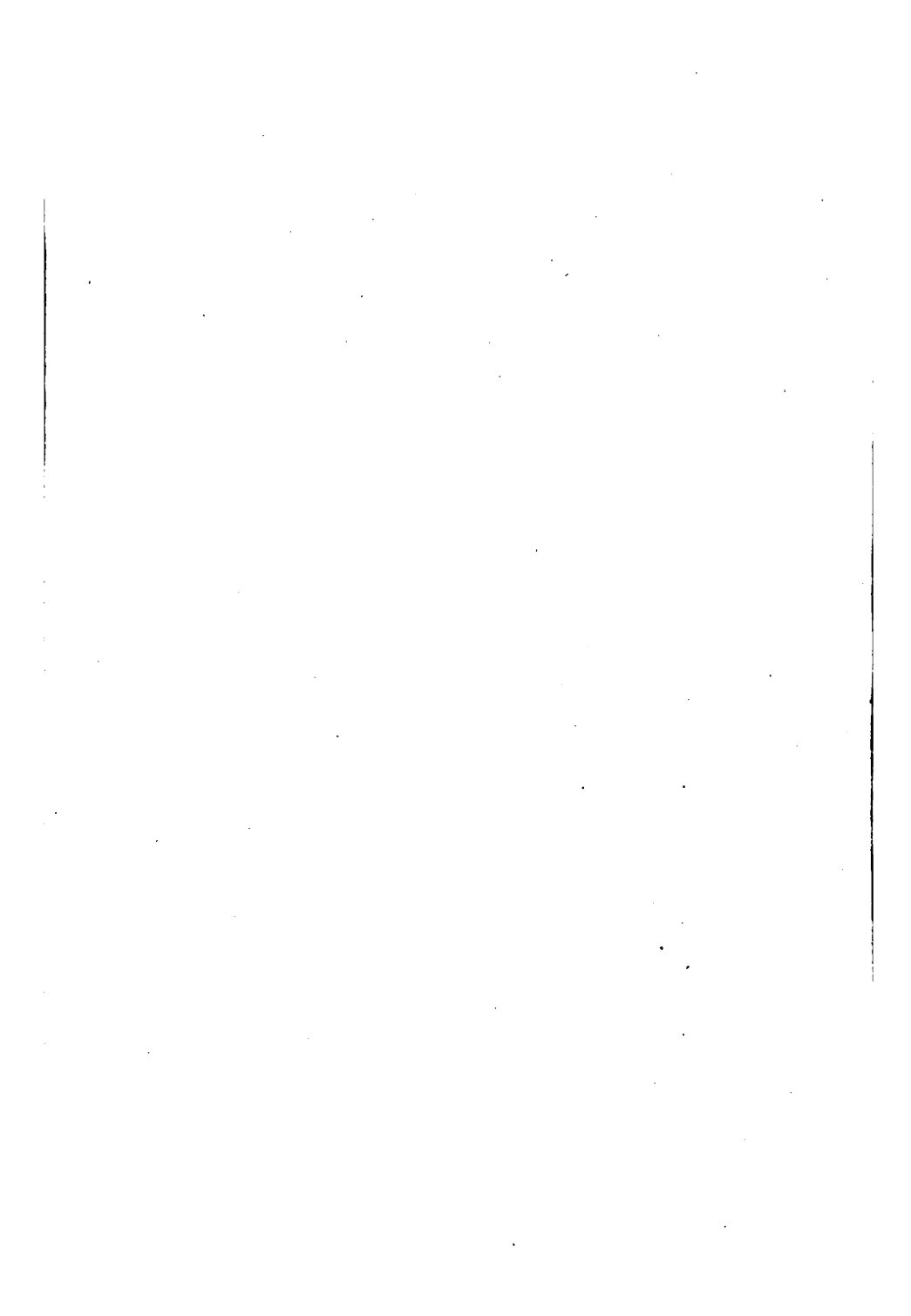
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## **CHINATOWN BALLADS**







*"Kep' old Wang on the anxious seat  
And the slant-eyed dudes in a constant stir."*

# ***Chinatown Ballads***

**By  
Wallace Irwin**

**Author of "At the Sign of the Dollar,"  
"Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum"**

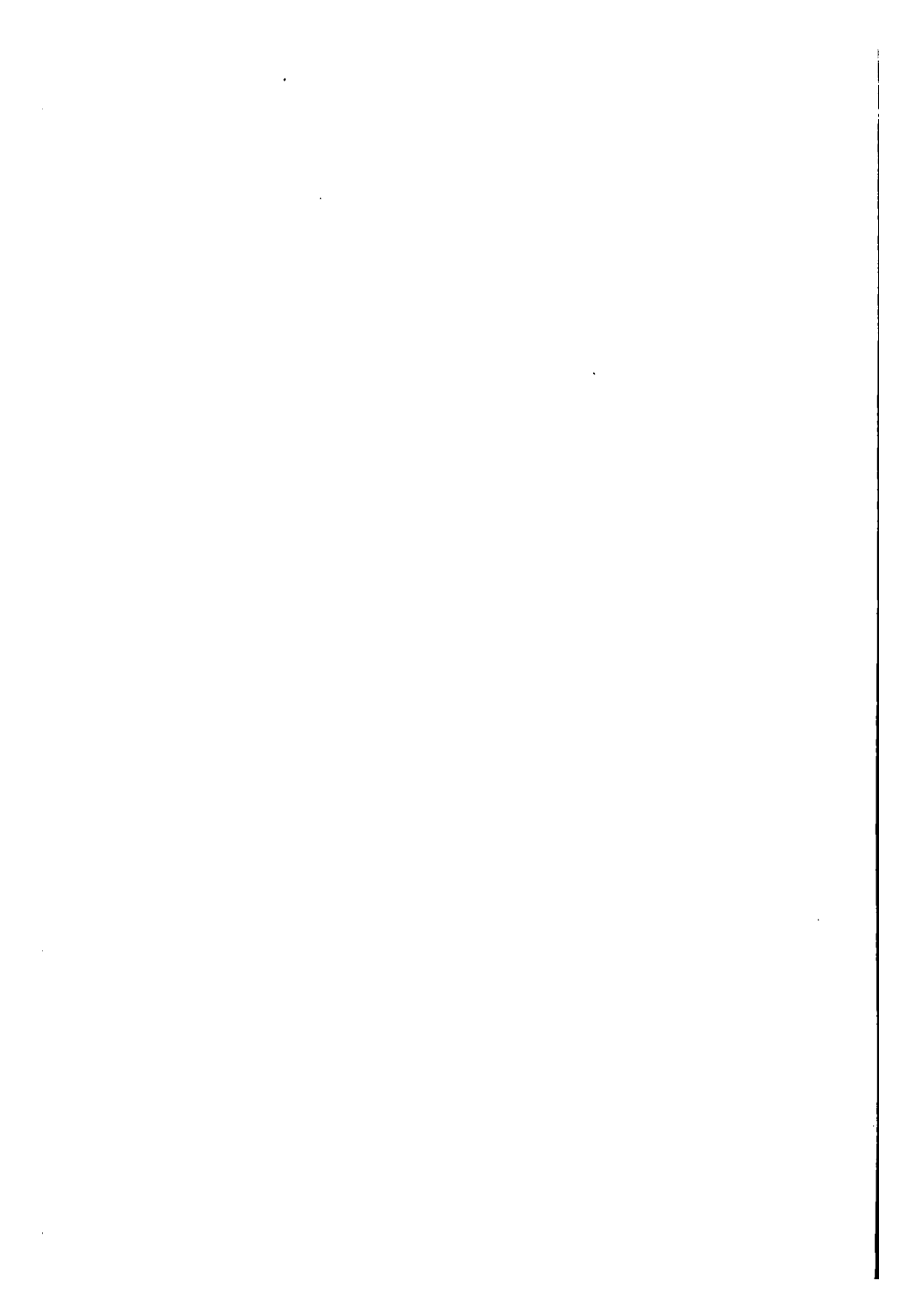


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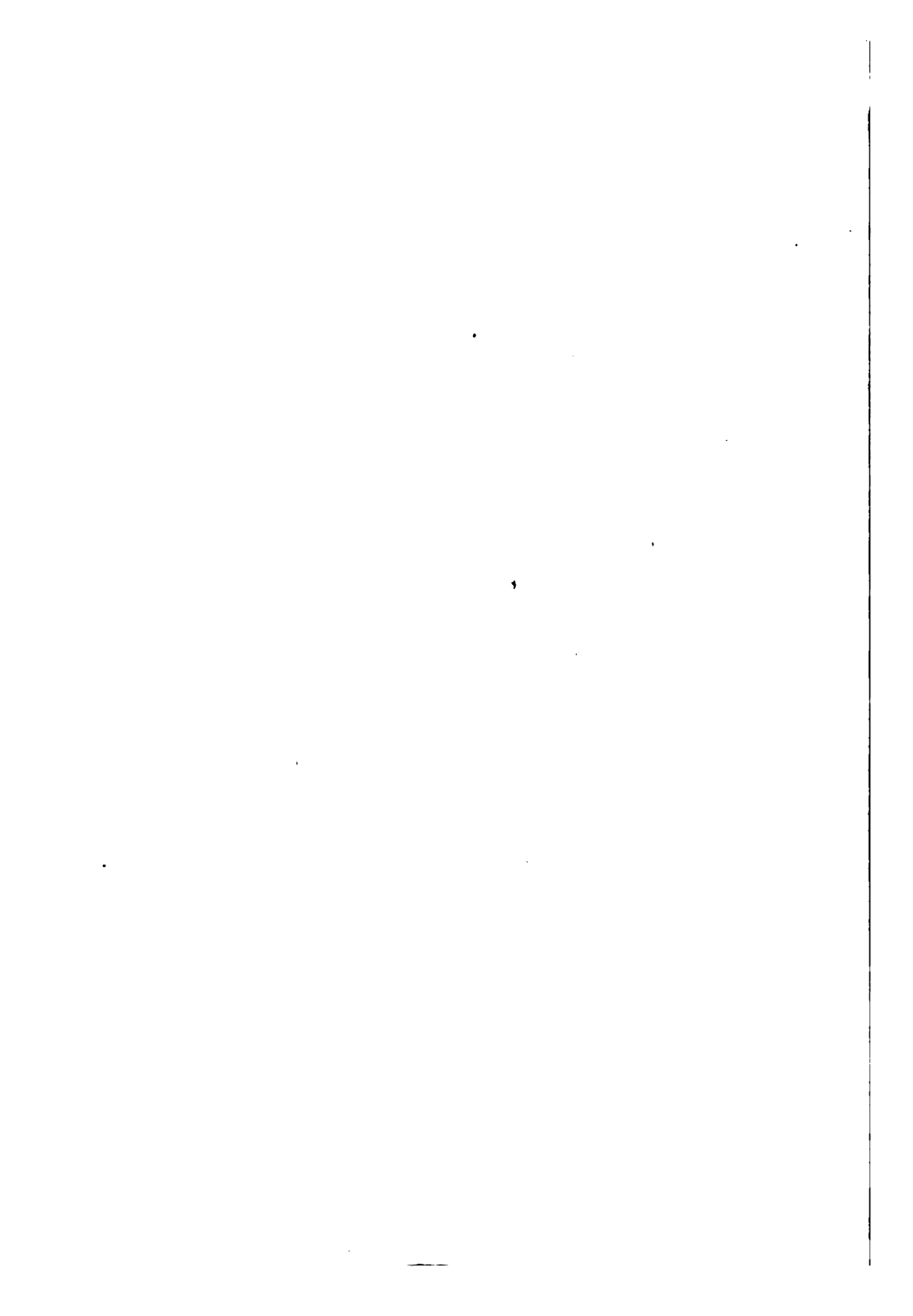
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**To the City of Dreams that has passed again  
to the magic box of the Dreamer this collection  
of rhymed memories is affectionately dedicated**



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## **YOUNG MR. YAN**



## YOUNG MR. YAN

**Y**U can take a Chink away from 'is hop,  
'Is lanterns an' gals an' pigs an' chop,  
Yu can dress 'im up in yer Christian  
clo'es,

Put texts in 'is head an' hymns in 'is nose,  
But yu'll find, when he's actin' a dead straight  
part,

He's a Chinaman still in 'is yellor heart.

Lend me a dime, boss—thank yu kind.

Not for opium, d'yu mind,

But a man must eat. Yes, young Mr. Yan

Was raised by hand on the mission plan—

'Merican talk an' 'Merican dress.

Wore 'em proper? I should say yes.

Yan got anxious to be a toff,

So he took 'is blouse an' 'is pigtail off.

Wore pink cuffs an' purple ties,

English overcoats, gentlemen's size,

Ready-shine shoes like the 'ristocrats,

Auburn gloves an' Panama hats.

### YOUNG MR. YAN

Wasn't a dude on the Frisco line  
Had pants more creased or a coat more *fine*.  
Often I seen him—whole she-bang—  
Struttin' at night through the coolie gang  
Where the punk-smoke blew from the joss-  
house nigh  
An' the little Chink fiddles squeaked long an'  
high.

Yan's old man was a Canton Chink;  
Stuck to 'is joss like meat an' drink.  
Long silk skirt an' little black queue,  
He prayed to 'is father—believed it, too—  
So he didn't take stock in the mission school  
An' spoke of 'is son as a "hip big fool."

Old man Yan kept a lottery-shack—  
Restaurant front an' game out back,  
Sat at 'is desk an' glared through 'is specs  
At the guides an' the tourist rubbernecks,  
As proud as a god an' rich as a Jew  
(For reasons that him an' the Sargeant  
knew).

The Chiny gals of the felt-shoe sort  
Wasn't for young Mr. Yan, the sport.

## YOUNG MR. YAN

He ran with a gal named Miss Ah Ti;  
Shirt-waist lady with hair fluffed high  
An' French-heeled shoes on 'er little feet—  
Lived with white folks on Washington Street.

Civilized pair they was an' grand.  
She played the pianna to beat the band  
While Yan sang "Vilets" an' "Promus  
Me"

In a chop-suey tenor that reached high Z.  
They spoke good English an' grammar, too,  
'Most as proper as me an' you.

Old man Yan, when he heard the news,  
He jumped plum out of 'is gunboat shoes,  
For he'd bought Yan a wife in Chinytown—  
Eight hundred dollars—fifty down  
An' a hundred more for a marriage-feast.  
It was disappointin' to say the least.

So he sent for 'is offspring after a while  
An' yippi-ki-yi-ed in high old style,  
But the boy got sassy an' said that they  
Would skip an' git married in San José.  
That was the night that the Yups broke out  
For the highbinder killin' you read about.

YOUNG MR. YAN

It's a long tale, boss, how the row began  
That set 'em to gunnin' for old man Yan.  
They'd given the job to a moon-faced boy,  
A genius for killin', named Ng Ah Poy,  
Who went to the Clay Street lottery-shop  
An' found the old gentleman smokin' 'is hop.

'Twas an easy job—jest a single shot  
That tumbled the smoker out of 'is cot,  
Where dead as a pig on the floor he lay—  
Murderer, whisked by 'is friends away,  
Sank like the ghost of a pipe-dream, down  
Into the cellars of Chinytown.

Young Mr. Yan? When they come an' said  
That the shake was up an' 'is dad was dead,  
It was easy to see he had clean fergot  
'Is ancestor worship an' all that rot—  
Say, how can a Christian un'erstand  
When a Chinaman smuggles a gun in 'is  
hand?

. . . . .  
'Twas Waverley Place on a Sunday night.  
As I talked with Kelley by yonder light  
A bunch of coolies tumbled pellmell  
Out of the Wong Fook fan-tan hell,

YOUNG MR. YAN

An' right in their midst came a short-haired  
swell  
With a Christian hat an' a Christian shell.

Somp'n was doin'. The crowd closed thick  
As the grip o' death. Then there barked out  
quick  
The forty-eight calibre *bang—bang—bang!*  
And a dead man tumbled out of the gang.  
He was a innocent, moon-faced boy,  
The genius for killin', named Ng Ah Poy.

The watchman's whistle piped over the  
square—  
The cops came lopin' from everywhere;  
Chinks began to scatter an' climb  
Forty directions at a time,  
Into the basements, into doors,  
Into the stairways over stores.

Young Mr. Yan with 'is smokin' gun  
Led the crowd in the general run.  
See that joss-house? Turned up short  
Into yon little, black, greasy court,  
Where he sunk like the ghost of a pipe-  
dream, down  
Into the cellars of Chinytown.

### YOUNG MR. YAN

What has become of young Mr. Yan?  
You can take a Chink away from 'is fan,  
Away from 'is lotteries, fiddles, an' joss,  
Yu can give 'is queue to the barber, boss;  
But yu can't git down to the roots that start  
From the yeller base of 'is yeller heart.

**YUT HO**



## YUT HO

**G**HOSTS, yu ask, in Chinytown? Say,  
ther ain't no moon to-night,  
An' the alley here is dark—let's  
move over to the light.

Did yu see 'er? No, the one wit' the blos-  
som in 'er hair—

Kind o' sidle t'rough the crowd, kind o' fade  
up yonder stair

Wit' 'er flat eyes showin' white, on 'er lips a  
bloody stain—

Yes, I've been a-smokin' hop and the devil's  
in me brain—

But the Chineese ghosts is out, and I seen 'er,  
seen 'er plain!

'Twas a shadder? Yes, perhaps. I have  
orfen seen 'em so,

And the little one that passed was the shad-  
der of Yut Ho,

Her that was a Christian slave, daughter of  
the merchant, Kwan,

## YUT HO

Sam Yup boss, who ruled the roost till he  
dropped 'is wealth at *fan*,  
Died in pious peace and left 'is fat widow fer  
to pay  
Fer cold storage on 'is bones w'en they  
shipped the box away  
To be planted in the tombs w'ere 'is dads and  
granddads lay.

Now the mother, Luey Sing, wit' 'er little  
porky eyes  
Figgered up the girl, Yut Ho, as a piece o'  
merchandise,  
Thinkin' how the cash on hand to be netted  
on the same  
Would pay off the honest debts Kwan had  
left behind the game.  
So she made a sing-song talk wit' the dealer,  
Wong Tin Gay,  
Till he promised on 'is joss he would call  
around next day  
Wit' a t'ousand dollars cash, jest to take the  
girl away.

Yut Ho, squattin' in 'er room, seen the dealer  
come, and heard  
All the chin-chin down below—understood it  
every word;



*"Found a ladder to the ground w'ere  
she glided down, then fleet  
As a bird she sought the door o' the  
Mission up the Street."*



## YUT HO

And she gathered what she owned in a green  
silk handkerchief,  
Raised the skylight of 'er room and crept  
quiet as a thief  
T'rough the frame, along the tiles, 'cross the  
roof wit' padded feet,  
Found a ladder to the ground w'ere she  
glided down, then fleet  
As a bird she sought the door o' the Mission  
up the street.

So the Mission Lady came and she found 'er  
at the door  
Bobbin' like a j'inted doll till 'er *saam* sleeves  
touched the floor,  
Sayin' over as she dipped, like a lesson, very  
slow,  
All the English words she knew: "Melly  
Clistmas—me Yut Ho."  
Then her green silk handkerchief she untied  
and brought to view  
What she owned: a ring o' jade and a pitcher  
fer *sam shu*,  
And a little candy heart stamped in English,  
"I Love You."

Well, the Lady understood and the Mission  
took 'er in;

## YUT HO

But the mother, Luey Sing, bein' old in years  
and sin,  
Vowed to git 'er daughter back, even if she  
had to raise  
All the Eight Immortal Ones and the High  
Six Companies,  
So she offered Yung Ho-eng, blackmail ex-  
pert, Hop Sing man,  
Half the value of the girl if he'd smoke 'er  
up a plan,  
Somp'n smooth—and that's the time that the  
tunnel-work began.

Two years passed, a deal o' time w'en a girl  
is seventeen  
(Courtin' time fer any girl, be she yeller,  
white, or green);  
So the Mission Lady looked fer a decent Chi-  
nee lad  
As would take 'er to 'is home and as wouldn't  
treat 'er bad—  
Two years! what the hell are *they* to the yel-  
ler race—as cold  
As the idols that they feed wit' ther rice-  
cakes and ther gold  
To appease ther wooden hearts, shriveled  
tight—and oh, how old!

## YUT HO

Yut Ho, bein' trained and taught, was a-git-  
tin' civilized,  
Learnin' white folks' customs, too, in a man-  
ner Christianized,  
Half-believed the Bible-talks and the pious  
hymns, I think  
(Which is plenty more sincere than the aver-  
age Christian Chink);  
Called the Mission school 'er home, never  
pinin' fer the lack  
Of 'er early heathen ways—always dreadin'  
to go back  
To the slav'ry and the sin of 'er Bartlett  
Alley shack.

'Bout this time ther come a Chink to the Mis-  
sion Sunday-school,  
Pie-faced barber, name Min Hop, godly as  
the Golden Rule.  
He was jest a pig-tailed saint—nothin' less—  
in all 'is acts,  
Seemed to eat the very ink off the gospel  
books and tracts,  
Talked religion t'rough 'is hat till 'is teach-  
ers felt so free  
That they smiled a happy smile w'en he calls  
and says, says he,

YUT HO

"Me heep Clistian China boy—likee Yut Ho mally me."

Sure, the Mission Lady t'ought that Min Hop was jest the stuff—

Yut Ho also seen the boy and she liked 'im well enough,

Though she had 'er own mistrusts, fer she hesitated some

W'en he asked an early date fer the weddin'-day to come.

After that Min called wit' flowers Thursday evenin' onct a week,

Sat there purrin' like a cat, somp'n wonderful how meek,

Yut Ho doin' fancy-work, much too proper-like to speak.

No one knows how it occurred—it was jest the Chinees way—

Min the barber and Yut Ho left the Mission school one day.

Yes, I seen 'em hand in hand shufflin' on wit' padded feet

T'rough the little painted lane leadin' into Jackson Street,

Wit' her green silk handkerchief holdin' all the wealt' she knew—

## YUT HO

Jest a finger-ring o' jade and a pitcher fer  
*sam shu*  
And a little candy heart marked in English,  
"I Love You."

Bartlett Alley, number twelve—see the  
workin' of ther plan?—  
Wit' a brace o' handy pals stood Ho-eng, the  
Hop Sing man,  
Lookin' up and down the lane from the cor-  
ner of 'is eye.  
Min Hop, leadin' of the girl, nudged 'im  
soft as he went by,  
And the shadders drew in close, choked 'er,  
dragged 'er up a stair—  
Someone shuffled down the hall and an iron  
door banged in there—  
Chinytown, a-passin' by, seen and smiled and  
didn't care.

Bartlett Alley, number twelve—in a cellar-  
room behind  
There's an opium-smokin' j'int buried where  
the cops can't find.  
Yes, I've been there off and on—mostly *on*  
I guess, of late,  
Fer the "black smoke" draws and draws till  
yu love the things yu hate;

## YUT HO

Love the brown molasses string as yu pull it  
frum the shell,  
As it bulbs above the lamp wit' its sickish,  
peanut smell  
Till yu drink and drink the smoke, tastin'  
heaven in its hell.

On a brown bench 'long o' mine, poppy-dead,  
a smoker lay  
Wit' 'is open eyes all glazed like the lacquer  
on a tray.  
At 'is desk ('way off it looked), the proprie-  
tor, Ah Ying,  
Sat a-countin' of 'is cash, passin' beads upon  
a string;  
Now the room seemed long and long, and  
the light was like a spark;  
Ying seemed threadin' colored stars on to  
moonbeams t'rough the dark,  
Catchin' comets by ther tails— Hello!  
*what's that racket?—hark!*

In a room above me head I could hear a  
moanin' high  
Like a woman in distress callin' China-fash-  
ion, "Ai-i-i-i!"  
Full an hour it seemed to wail all around  
me—then was still

*"On a brown bench 'long o' mine, poppy dead, a smoker lay."*





## YUT HO

Till the silence creepin' in struck me clammy-  
like and chill.

Som'ers in me dopy brain I could hear a  
small voice say:

"That was *her*, and that was *her* that yu seen  
'em steal to-day!"

Then the smoke clumb to me head and I  
tumbled clean away.

W'en I woke and looked around, middle day-  
light, gray and wide,

Filtered t'rough a greasy pane from a greasy  
court outside.

Wit' the stale drug in me brain and me senses  
all aw whirl

Comes the memory of a sound—'twas the  
night-cry of the girl

I had heard—then wit' the thrills, pins and  
needles in me hair,

From the reekin' j'int I reeled, staggered to  
the open air—

Bartlett Alley, number twelve, up the nar-  
row, windin' stair.

Down the long, dark passage-way, gropin'  
wit' me hands I steered

To a gratin' in the wall w'ere a square o'  
lamplight leered.

## YUT HO

Peepin' t'rough the prison-hole all the inside  
room I seen:  
China lilies in a bowl, teak-wood tables,  
brown and clean,  
Hangin' prayer-scrolls—as I looked a black  
shadder seemed to fall  
Stark and straight and human-like, up and  
down across the wall—  
(Shadders! ah, the shapes they take, and I  
guess I've seen 'em all!)

Peerin' closer I could see to the beam above  
me head  
Yut Ho hangin' by 'er neck from 'er silken  
waist-sash—dead.  
Right before me near the lamp—could o'  
touched 'em wit' me hand—  
Was 'er green silk handkerchief spread out  
careful on a stand  
Where she'd laid wit' lovin' care all the  
treasures that she knew—  
Jest a finger-ring o' jade and a pitcher fer  
*sam shu*  
And a little candy heart stamped in English,  
“I Love You.”

Ghosts in Chinytown? O Gawd! if the risin'  
spooks begin

YUT HO

Comin' in ther proper shapes wit' a ghost fer  
every sin,  
What a beastly lot would swarm from the  
cellars over there,  
Spotted, dragon-headed worms wit' ther  
queues o' human hair—  
But *she* doesn't come that way when she flut-  
ters from the grave,  
Fades and flickers like the breath of the little  
life she gave  
As a heathen sacrifice with a Christian soul  
to save!



**YOU SABE ME!**



## YOU SABE ME!

(The Refugee's Story.)

### I

**B**ELIEVE in Chinese Exclusion?  
Well, maybe I did, before  
The day of the Great Confusion  
When the Quake in its wrath uptore  
The roots of the town, and the Reaper  
Mowed us with flame—then I saw  
The faith of a Race that's deeper  
Than any Exclusion Law.

Yes, I took in the politicians'  
Rhetoric, buncombe, air,  
Who, from their fat positions,  
Mentioned "the white man's share,"  
The white man's right to bully  
The race with the braided queue—  
Kick 'em from boat to alley,  
Cheat 'em in bench and pew.

**YOU SABB ME!**

Bong was the name of our coolie;  
Long-fingered Canton boy—  
Went at his job with a truly  
Pagan sort of a joy.  
Serving-man, cook and waiter,  
Roustabout, general slob—  
That's what the Chinee-hater  
Calls "taking a white man's job."

We lived in the Rincon section,  
Alice, the Kid and I.  
Bong was the Home Protection  
And held his position high.  
Gentle he was with the baby—  
Never was cross or grim.  
Used to explain, "Oh, maybe  
I catchem lil' gal like him!"

When I left for the office early,  
In the era before the Wreck,  
After I'd kissed my girlie  
And the Kid hung close to my neck,  
Then I'd chuckle to Bong, "You Chinker,  
Take care of 'em both, d'ye see?"  
So the coolie would grin like a tinker  
And answer, "You sabb me!"

**YOU SABB ME!**

Bong, though his head was level,  
His conscience ironed to a gloss,  
Rather worshipped the Devil  
And sneered at the "Christian joss."  
He learned from the heathen sages  
A budget of useful lore,  
And I found him investing his wages  
In a Chinese general store.

Those years that I spent with Alice  
On the hills of our merriment!  
Every man's home was his palace,  
(We're living now in a tent).  
By the sweet bay we slumbered,  
From the gay height looked down—  
Who thought that our days were numbered  
And hell was beneath the town?

## YOU SADE ME!

### II

I was away in Seattle.  
The earthquake rumbled through  
Like the jar of a mighty battle—  
Then the news of the Horror grew.  
“San Francisco is shaken—  
Half of the buildings down—  
Dead from the ruins taken—  
Fire is sweeping the town!”

How I tore to the station,  
Drunk with a man's despair;  
Chaos was on Creation—  
My wife and my child out there!  
We squeezed in the trains like cattle  
Packed in the slaughter-stall;  
And when we pulled out of Seattle  
The night was beginning to fall.

Travelling men and sailors,  
Millionaires, merchants, sports,  
Two-penny clerks and tailors,  
Touts from the Coast resorts,

**YOU SABB ME!**

Spoke of their homes like brothers  
Bonded in grief—and when  
I prayed, “ God pity the mothers! ”  
A gambler whispered, “ Amen! ”

Oakland! a pall of terror  
Blinded the sun on high—  
The bay, like a broken mirror,  
Glared to the smoking sky.  
Tattered and smoke-bedevilled  
Crowds upon crowds poured through,  
Limping, insane, dishevelled—  
And the glare from the City grew.

**YOU SABB ME!**

**III.**

Day was short. And the darkness  
Out of the smoke clouds fell.  
The Ferry spire stood black in the fire  
Like a crag in the mouth of hell.  
All night long swung the ferries,  
Listed and cramped and crammed,  
And all night long came the fleeing throng  
Like the hosts of the haunted damned.

Twenty-four hours at the ferries  
I searched the mad thousands through.  
Haggard and wan I looked upon,  
But never a face I knew.  
Beggars, burdened with riches,  
Muttered and toiled ahead—  
I called aloud in the face of the crowd  
Who looked with the eyes of the dead.

Then someone spoke from the thousands  
With a voice that I seemed to know.  
“They are safe back there on Union Square—  
I saw them an hour ago.

**YOU SABE ME!**

They were warm and under cover,  
Close to the Monument.  
It wasn't so bad, for your Chinatown lad  
Had stretched up a sheet like a tent.

"He had brought them food from the ruins,  
And seemed to be keeping house.  
Squat on his heels, he was cooking their  
meals—

The Kid was wrapped in his blouse.  
His face was black from the burning,  
But his grin it was good to see  
When I called from the throng, 'Take care  
of 'em, Bong!'  
And he answered, 'You sabe me!'"

This was my neighbor's story.  
And well you may understand  
How I could not speak till the tears from my  
cheek  
Splashed over his outstretched hand;  
And of all the pure, Christian blessings  
Which pulpit and church employ,  
I hope one sped to the pig-tailed head  
Of my heathen Chinatown boy!

**YOU SABB ME!**

**IV.**

One night more at the ferry.  
I could see her—heaven be blessed!—  
Out of the mob she came with a sob  
And fainted away on my breast.  
Bong sat near with the baby  
Fast asleep on his knee,  
And he said as he smiled and looked at the  
child,  
“ I fetchem—you sabb me ! ”

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

**"Beware! what proceeds from you will return to you  
again!"—*The Sayings of Meng Tsz*'.**

## **“HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?”**

**Y**U notice them carriages over the way  
And the bang-gong yell inside?  
They're buryin' old Lee Wo to-day  
With a curse on 'is yellin' hide.  
They're scarin' the devil an' singein' 'is hairs  
With the noise an' the smudge and the  
smell;  
But ther scented smoke an' ther paper prayers  
Can't keep old Lee from hell.

See them pale ghost-lanterns above the hacks  
An' the white man's hearse at the door,  
See the varnished pigs they carry in sacks  
An' the funeral grub galore—  
Ain't ther many a Christian flat on 'is bier  
With a priest at 'is head an' feet  
Jest as scart to go as the late Lee Wo  
To the wrath of the Judgment Seat?

Lee, the Reformer—that he was—  
An' a excellent business man;

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

A cagey old cove on the opium laws  
An' a fox at the game of *fan*.  
He thought a lot, but 'is natur' was such  
That he hadn't but little to say.  
If yu wanted to buy and yu ast, "How  
much?"  
He'd answer, "How muchee you pay?"

If a tourist looked in 'is little shop  
At a jug that was wuth a dime,  
"How muchee you pay?" old Lee would say,  
And he'd bunco 'em half the time.  
No tag nor nuthin' to show the price  
Of the goods that yu bought from Lee.  
'Twas a trick of the biz an' a hobby of his—  
"How muchee you pay?" says he.

F'r instance, one mornin', 'is little gal  
Was a-playin' around the store  
When the gambler, Yok, an' a steady pal  
Comes shufflin' through the door.  
"How muchee?" says Yok as he points 'er  
out  
In a offhand, Chinytown way.  
It flabbered Lee Wo fer a minute or so,  
Then he says, "How muchee you pay?"



*"See the varnished pigs they carry in sacks  
And the funeral grub galore."*



**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

He bought things cheap an' he sold 'em  
high—

'Twas the game an' he played it well.  
As long as the world had somethin' to buy  
Lee Wo had somethin' to sell.  
He drove a bargain fer flesh an' blood  
With a profit on all he sold,  
Till it happened so (they are buryin' Wo),  
That he traded 'is word fer gold.

Have yu heard of the Orient League of Re-  
form

An' the pipe-dream they began,  
A-smokin' together, to blow up a storm  
Fer the Dowager Queen, Tsi An?  
Ther was Charlie Chong an' Lee Bow Wong  
An' the opium smuggler, Low,  
Ther was Hong Ming Get, an' the day they  
met  
They let in me friend, Lee Wo.

Yes, they let in me friend, Lee Wo, one night  
When the Quarter was still as the grave,  
When the shutters was closed an' the fog was  
white  
An' the felt shoes slipped on the pave.

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

Then they whispered together, the League of  
Reform,  
In a Mon Foy Restaurant room,  
An' they made a pledge on a hatchet's edge  
By ther fathers under the tomb.

Five thousand apiece was the price, some say,  
Which they gave to the sacred bund:  
But this I know—it was old Lee Wo  
Who was chosen to keep the fund.  
What the cash was there fer, I dunno,  
And how it was spent, search me;  
But the coin kept warm in the egg of reform  
That was bein' hatched out by Lee.

Then the Consul heard of the League of  
Reform  
(He was wise on the way to do),  
So he cabled word of what he'd heard  
Till the Chinese Government knew.  
How d'yu s'pose the Consular spy  
Had savvy enough to go  
Neither to Chong nor to Lee Bow Wong  
But straight to me friend, Lee Wo?

Lee was hittin' the hop that night  
Under a black teak shelf,

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

Noddin' asleep an' a-lookin' a heap  
Like the crockery god hisself,  
When Hung Ah Ho, the Consular spy,  
Dropped in fer a friendly chat,  
An' they gabbled, them two, an' they drank  
*sam shu*  
Till far into night they sat.

Hung he spoke of the Middle Land  
An' the danger of plots an' things,  
An' the death of the feller that raised a hand  
Fer the murder of queens an' kings.  
He could make it warm fer the League of  
Reform—  
Ther was certain names to say—  
Perhaps Lee Wo might happen to know—  
Says Lee, "How muchee you pay?"

"How muchee you pay?" was all he ast,  
But it chanced in a week or so  
That they collared Chong an' Lee Bow  
Wong  
An' Hong Ming Get an' Low.  
Fraudulent sort, said the chiefs of the port  
Where the Consular word prevailed.  
I was there the day they was taken away  
When the "City of Pekin" sailed.

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

They sailed like a bunch of brides, them  
Four,  
Though they knowed that they went to  
death;  
Then they thought of the traitor safe on the  
shore  
An' they cursed 'im under ther breath.  
So they uttered an oath that summoned both  
The gods of ther hates an' fears—  
Is ther anythin' worse than a Chinaman's  
curse  
That lasts fer a million years?

. . . . .

It was Saturday night when Lee was took  
(Jest hear how the mourners yell!)  
With 'is sins at 'is throat he jabbered an'  
shook  
As he looked in the eyes of hell.  
Fer a ghostly Four comes up through the  
floor  
An' all in a row they stands  
As nice as they might, an' they bows polite  
With ther bloody heads in ther hands.

Lee covered 'is face with 'is skinny arm,  
But the eyes of 'is mind they seen

**"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"**

The heads of the friends he had brought to  
harm

At the sword of the Dowager Queen;  
An' they come so close that 'is pigtail rose  
An' 'is cork-colored face went gray.  
But the lips of the dead they smiled an' said,  
"Lee Wo, how muchee you pay?"

. . . . .

Hear the oboes shriek an' the fiddles squeak—  
They're a-buryin' Lee to-day—  
See the leaves they turn an' the prayers they  
burn

To shoo the devil away—  
But them headless Four on the ghostly shore  
Is a-waitin' to pay ther grudge  
When the stark Lee Wo shall shiverin' go  
To the court of 'is Mandarin Judge.

Heathen or Christian, what has he got  
Fer the lives of 'is friends he sold,  
Fer the child he gave to the lot of a slave  
At the price of a gambler's gold?  
Yet stripped to the soul of all that he stole  
Ther's a bargain to drive to-day  
When the Mandarin god shall ask with a  
nod,  
"Lee Wo, how muchee you pay?"



# **THE RIVAL WIZARDS**

A white man's luck's as he makes it,  
And a nigger's luck's as he takes it;  
But a Chinaman's luck is the Devil's own luck,  
And it's thanks to the priest who fakes it.

*Ballad of Portsmouth Square.*

## THE RIVAL WIZARDS

**Y**OK Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, is a-leavin' Chinytown.

He has boarded up his winders and 'is  
sign's a-comin' down,  
He's a-walkin' to the station wit' 'is shiny  
black valise

And the beggars spit behind 'im and the  
slave-girls hiss like geese

While the coolies *muck-a-hi-lo* disrespectful-  
like, becuz

Yok Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, ain't so  
pop'lar as he was.

And the devil-shop of Sang Ho, right acrost  
the lane from his,  
That is likewise closed, (respectin' Sang Ho's  
fun'ral services)

Gee! I'm most afeared the bogies 'll be out  
to-night in mobs

Both them champyon devil-chasers bein' ab-  
sent from ther jobs,

### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

And the ghosts o' nine diseases will be how-  
lin' down the street  
Now them famous magic-merchants is re-  
moved from Dupont Street.

Seven years them wise old fellers kep' ther  
shops acrost the way,  
Sold ther prayer-scrolls, done ther magic,  
baked ther sperit-cakes fer pay;  
Seven years they watched each other t'rough  
ther dirty window-lights,  
Each one hopin' to the other evil days and  
evil nights;  
Seven years Sang Ho prayed faithful, wish-  
in' Yok was done an' dead,  
While Yok Tu-ang vowed misfortune on  
Sang Ho's old pig-tailed head.

Bein' wizards by perfession you'd a-thunk  
that suthin' dire  
Would 'a' come o' them magicians w'en  
they started spittin' fire—  
But ther didn't nothin' happen; and ther biz-  
ness thrived, each one  
Gainin' daily reputation fer the wonders what  
he done,

### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

Each one burnin' punk and candles, howlin',  
wavin' of 'is arms,  
Givin' good advice on marriage, sellin'  
lanterns, shrouds an' charms.

If a burglar robbed a pawnshop someone sent  
fer Yok Tu-ang  
Who would do 'is parlor magic jest to catch  
the robber gang.  
First he'd call on all the devils an' the ghosts  
that cheat an' rob,  
Then he'd draw a sperit-portrait o' the guy  
what done the job,  
Then he'd sell 'is good-luck mottoes costin'  
fifty cents apiece—  
If they didn't catch the burglar 'twas the  
fault o' the police.

Sang Ho's specialty was genii. If a Chink  
had fuzzy dreams,  
If he suffered from the nightmare or woke  
up wit' grunts an' screams,  
"Them," says Sang, "is evil genii what is  
troublin' of yer snore."  
So he'd put up magic mirrors all around the  
bedroom door.  
An' when wicked Mr. Genie come a-sneakin'  
t'rough the night,

### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

*Plunk!* he'd catch 'im in a bottle an' he'd  
drive the cork down tight.  
Well, them rivals went on hatin' of each  
other more an' more;  
Sang was gittin' all the bizness an' it made  
Yok Tu-ang sore.  
Then one day ther came a crisis w'en the very  
rich Poy Lo  
Got took sudden wit' a headache, so he sent  
fer old Sang Ho.  
Gee! old Yok was mad as hornets, an' he  
swore by every charm  
In the shop of all the devils that he'd do 'is  
rival harm.

Sang Ho visited 'is patient, looked quite satis-  
fied an' said,  
"Ther's three very purple genii now residin'  
in yer head.  
One's a seven-legged demon, one's a double-  
faced *yau-kwei*.<sup>\*</sup>  
One's a little shrimp-tailed devil what's  
asleep behin' yer eye."  
So he took three wide-mouthed bottles an' he  
said three prayers polite—  
*Plunk!* the fiends fell in the bottles an' he  
drove the corks in tight.

<sup>\*</sup> *Yau-kwei*—evil genius.

### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

So Sang Ho went home quite happy, feelin'  
proud about hisself,  
Put them genii-laden bottles careful-like upon  
a shelf—

But old Yok acrost the alley seen 'im lay them  
bottles by  
An' he said, "You bet I catch 'em!" an' he  
looked an' evil eye.

Late that night Yok picked a winder in the  
shop of old Sang Ho,  
Found them bottles an' uncorked 'em an' let  
all the genii go!  
With a cackle an' a clatter an' a gibber an' a  
scream

Flew them merry purple devils back to Poy  
Lo's troubled dream,  
T'rough the gay an' painted alleys, past the  
dark an' deadly lanes,  
Past the *pie gow* dens an' banquets, past the  
slaves in silken chains;  
An' the seven-legged demon an' the double-  
faced *yau-kwei*  
Crept in Poy Lo's ears and started all the  
pains behind 'is eye.

Well, when Sang woke up next mornin' and  
found out what Yok had done

### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

He jest shrieked an' pulled 'is pig-tail like a  
plum demented one,  
An' he run across the alley to the shop o'  
Yok an' yells,  
"Ye have spoilt me reputation an' ye've  
ruined all me spells—  
But I've got one trick to play ye to git even  
wit' yer spite—  
Yu'll be marked as an assassin—which yu'll  
be before the night!"

So Sang Ho he closed 'is bizness an' Sang Ho  
he made 'is will  
An' he hired eleven mourners an' a banquet  
fit to kill,  
An' he hired some gong-musicians, an' they  
all got full o' hop  
An' went screamin' in procession to Yok Tu-  
ang's devil-shop  
Where Sang Ho jumped to the doorway.  
"Look, ye murderer!" he said,  
Drank a bottleful o' acid, doubled up an'  
tumbled dead.

An' the gang o' hired musicians raised a  
daisy yell o' woe,  
Banged their gongs an' wailed an' shouted,  
"Yok Tu-ang has killed Sang Ho!"



*"An' the slave girls from the alleys, an' the  
coolies from the street  
Shuffled up to the excitement on their padded  
cat-like feet."*

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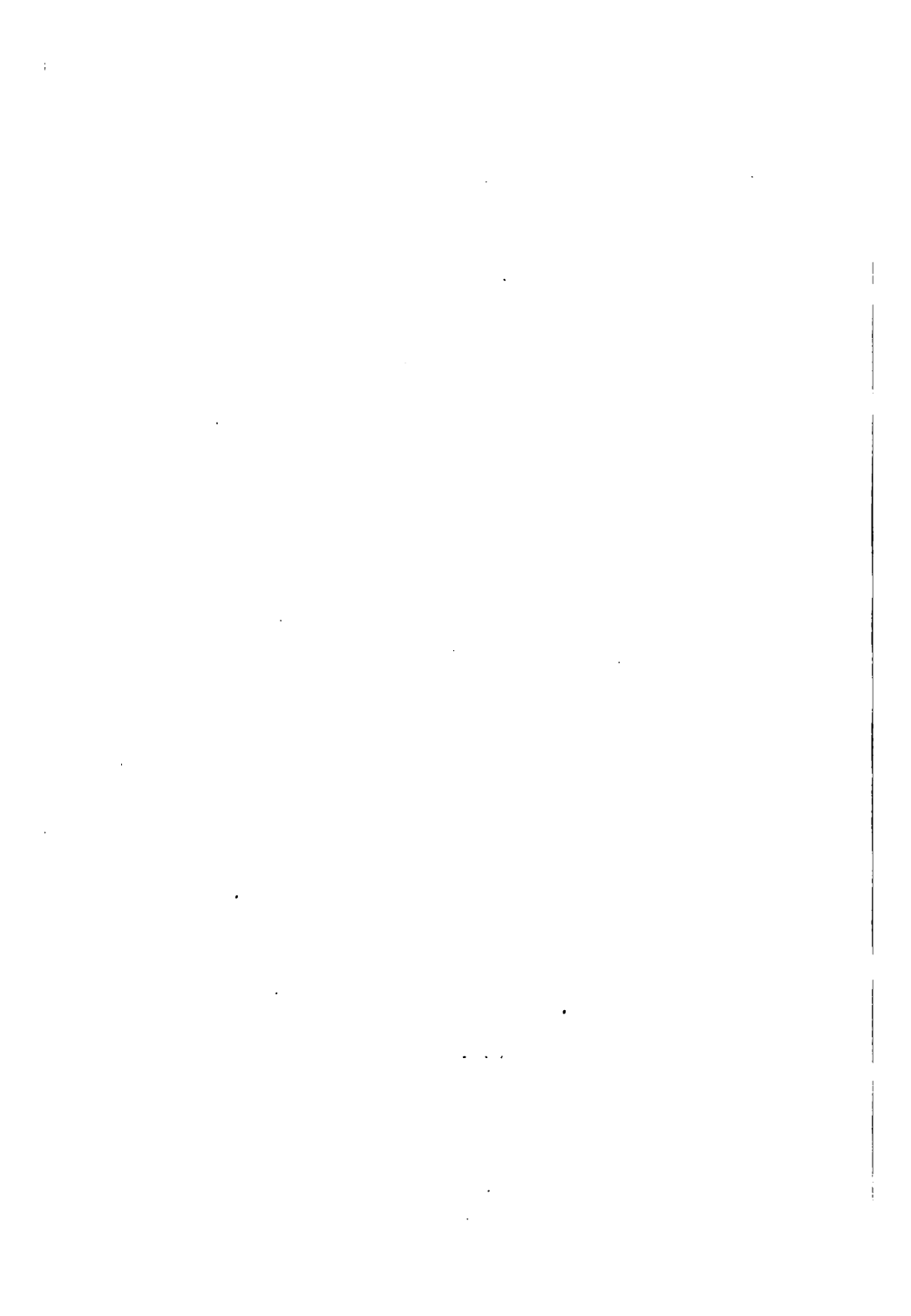
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### THE RIVAL WIZARDS

An' the slave-girls from the alleys an' the  
coolies from the street  
Shuffled up to the excitement on their padded,  
cat-like feet,  
Cussin' Yok an' pointin' at 'im; for they  
kinder seemed to know  
That in some way, indirectly, he had murdered  
old Sang Ho.

Yok Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, is a-leavin'  
Chinytown,  
Fer 'is *yau-kwei's* up an' doin', but 'is *feng-shui's*\*  
rather down,  
An' the very actors shun 'im since that luck-  
destroyin' night  
When 'is rival on 'is doorstep came an' killed  
hisself fer spite.  
No, the place wher Yok's a-goin' isn't known  
to the police,  
But he's walkin' to'rd the station wit' 'is shiny  
black valise.

\**Feng-shui*—good luck.



## **THE GREEN RAT**

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## THE GREEN RAT

**H**EY, boss, quick! d'ye see 'im duck  
Under the curb by Sun Mok's stall,  
Long-tail, bead-eye rat—bad luck!  
D'ye see 'is color? It's green, by all  
That's dead! some Chinaman's time has  
struck  
And the Plague's a-creepin' along the wall.

Call me “hop-head,” dope-sick bum  
If ye will—but I know that green is *green*  
And the old Bubonic's bound to come  
And set the Health Board sweepin' clean  
To put the microbes under thumb  
Wit' chloride o' lime and quarantine.

Somewheres up in the balconies  
Priests are howlin' ther heathen songs,  
Dippin' down on ther hands and knees,  
Smudgin' incense and bangin' gongs  
To fumigate the Devil and please  
The Health Board. God, the dread o' the  
Tongs.

## THE GREEN RAT

Somewheres down in the under side  
Tunnels and cellars and passageways,  
Where the pig-tailed coolies sleep and hide  
And never see daylight days and days,  
There the gray rats take what the gods provide—

But the Green Rat takes what the Devil  
pays.

Old Wang Too in 'is fiftieth year  
Up and married a butterfly,  
Girl o' the teahouse—case was clear,  
Wang Too bein' a soft old guy,  
That the day o' ther marriage the joss went  
queer

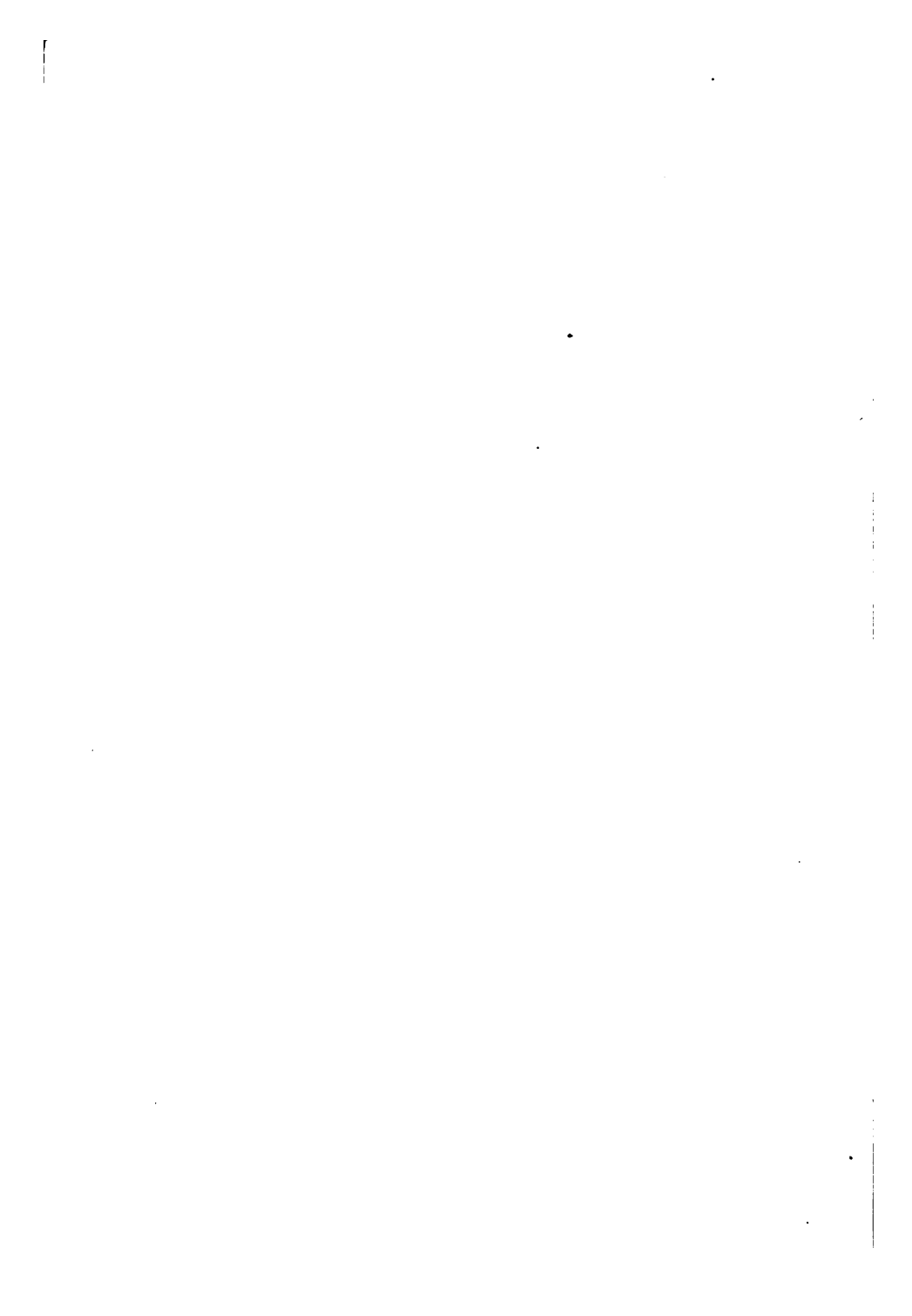
And the punk smoke got in the idol's eye.

Mrs. Wang, like a ruther neat  
Little wax doll, had a way wit' her.  
Kep' old Wang on the anxious seat  
And the slant-eyed dudes in a constant stir,  
When she pegged along on 'er bandaged feet,  
Off fer the Chineese Theater.

Poor old gent! he was human, I guess,  
Longed fer a wife instid of a toy;  
But 'is joss was good to 'im, I cornfess  
And the ghosts of 'is grand-dads wished 'im  
joy,



*"Chingdoreen babies, h're ye seen 'em play  
Here in the streets that has sickened men?"*



### THE GREEN RAT

(Thousand and one of 'em, more or less)  
When the Firstborn squalled in 'is house  
—a boy.

Little Wang Too in 'is grandma's lap  
Growed and flourished a year or so,  
Little blue coat and long-eared cap,  
(Fixed so the Devil he wouldn't know  
And bring the child to a strange mishap)  
Old Wang smiled as he watched 'im grow.

(Chinytown babes, have ye seen 'em play  
Here in the streets that has sickened men,  
Jest as happy and jest as gay  
As fairies dancin' on flowers—and then  
Trottin' at night to ther beds, away  
Under the reek o' some dragon's den?)

'Bout this time a bubonic scare  
Started the Health Board lookin' wise.  
Case reported off Portsmouth Square;  
Lottery agent ups and dies,  
Chinytown, tryin' to hush the affair,  
Quietly buries the dead—and lies.

Old Wang Too one night, as he sat  
Stringin' 'is cash beads back of a screen,  
Suddenly stopped and looked—what's that?  
Sneakin' along a shelf he seen

### THE GREEN RAT

The strangest, devilest lookin' rat—  
And sure as yer eyes, it was green, *bright  
green!*

Jest a minute he fastened 'is stare  
Straight on the eyes o' the old Wang Too,  
Then scampered off with a pious air  
Which might 'a' said, "And the next is  
you!"  
And the Chinaman groaned as he fastened a  
prayer  
Over the door—for he knew, he knew!

Somewheres up in the joss-house shrine  
Priests was beggin' the Plague to go,  
Firecrackers snappin' above the whine  
O' the flutes' and the fiddles' tremulo.  
(Wang, in 'is mind's eye, seen the line  
O' the white-sheet mourners, filin' slow.)

So he called 'is wife to 'is side and said,  
"The note o' the death-flute comes this  
way.  
Sell my houses when I am dead  
And sail to China wit' little Wang Gay  
Wher honor in age may be on 'is head  
Near the sacred tombs o' the ancient clay."

### THE GREEN RAT

Then the Plague came in. And the Butterfly  
Fluttered away from the shade o' doom  
Leavin' the head of 'er house to lie  
Fightin' wit' devils out o' the gloom  
As the cords swelled thick on 'is throat and  
thigh

And the breath o' the fever sat in the room.

Yes, she fluttered away in 'er butterfly stealth  
And went to the actor Hon Yin Moy,  
An' they soon made way wit' the old man's  
wealth,

But they didn't include the little boy  
As they sailed fer China in search of health—  
Was she a mother? Nix, she was a toy!

One year more an' the Plague seemed t'rough.  
Chinytown was the quietest yet;  
Nothin' more than a murder or two  
Over a Hip Sing fan-tan debt;  
Fiddles still squeaked and the flutes still blew  
In the balconies where the rich guys et.

Little Wang Gay in 'is grandma's lap  
Lay a-listenin' to 'er croon,  
Sinkin' halfways into a nap,  
"Lotos Boat" and the "Princess Moon"  
And the "Little Boy wit' the Dragon's Cap,"  
In a sort of a die-away cat-call tune.

### THE GREEN RAT

Till, tired o' singin', she fell asleep,  
Greasy an' wrinkled, the good ol' soul!  
When suthin' jumped wit' a suddent leap  
Onto the table, out of a hole,  
'An' the big Green Rat, beginnin' to creep  
Nibbled rice from the baby's bowl.

Then the Plague come in from the damp an'  
reck  
Of the secret passages underground,  
And he put 'is hands on the baby's cheek  
And the baby's eyes wit' the fever bound—  
'An' far an' faint ye could hear the shriek  
O' the joss-house fiddles, an evil sound.

**THE CHAMBER OF  
TRANQUILLITY**



## THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

**T**HIS here sounds a bit like Bluebeard  
trotted out as sompin' new;  
But it happened here in Chinytown  
where half the lies is true—  
Fer the Chink ain't skeert o' microbes, but  
he's powerful shy o' elves,  
And he keeps a stock o' devils packed in  
boxes on 'is shelves;  
And ther's fairy tales occurin' in these alleys  
day and night,  
Where the heathen says, "No sabe!"—but  
he's wise all right, all right.

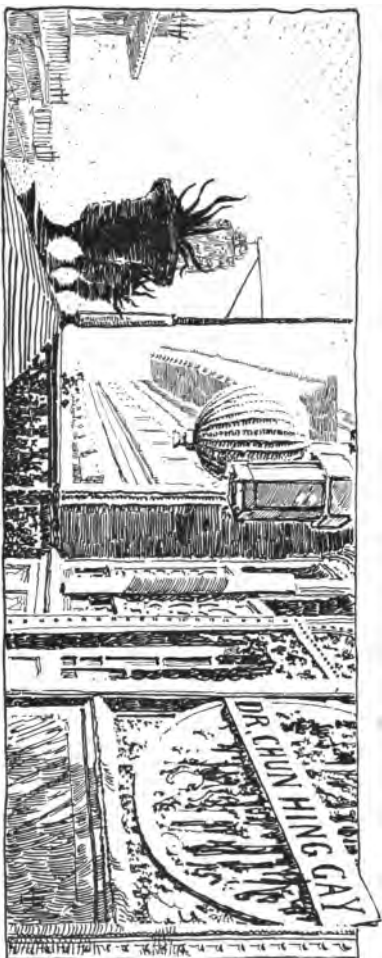
See that green and yeller balcony up yonder  
'crost the way,  
Wit' the gilded sign in English painted, "Dr.  
Chun Hing Gay"?  
Every coolie 'round the Quarter knows the  
Doctor by 'is name,  
Fer he's made a bunch o' money and he's  
made a pile o' fame;

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

And 'is cures has killed more *invalids* than  
all the plagues combined—  
W'ich is greatly to 'is credit and a blessin' of  
its kind.

He was jest a Canton coolie six or seven  
years ago,  
Smuggled in from San Diego t'rough the leak  
in Mexico—  
Bossed a fruit ranch in Sonoma, bought a  
China drug store cheap,  
Came to 'Frisco wearin' spectacles and seemed  
to know a heap.  
Them there phoney-lookin' letters painted on  
'is window say:  
"From a chilblain to a cancer I can cure you  
in a day."

Dr. Chun had one affliction, w'at he couldn't  
kill or cure;  
'Twas 'is wife, who was a vixen of the Tar-  
tar brand fer sure—  
Wasn't like the common yellin' gal, too bash-  
ful-like to speak,  
Fer the Quarter knowed the danger-sign w'en  
Mrs. Chun would squeak,  
And w'en Sergeant Doyle heard windows  
crash on Jackson Street he'd say:



*"See that green and yeller balcony up yonder 'cross the way,  
With the gilded sign in English, painted 'Dr. Chun Hing Gay.'"*



### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

"Oh, that's jest the dear ol' lady beatin' Dr.  
Chun Hing Gay."

Dr. Chun was a philosopher o' just and  
thoughtful mind;

W'en 'is herb-cure killed a patient he would  
say: "The gods is kind";

If 'is patient should recover he would say:  
"The gods give life"—

But he had a special maxim in referrin' to 'is  
wife.

W'en that lady wrecked the premises he'd  
murmur piously:

"Lo! the Wise Man loves 'is neighbors and  
preserves tranquillity."

One fine day w'en Chun was walkin' out  
a-lookin' rather scratched,

Wit' 'is pigtail half unbraided and 'is ear a  
trifle patched,

Old Wing Lee, the one-eyed goldsmith, says:  
"Yer joss is bad to-day—

Say, why don't ye git a wife that suits ye bet-  
ter, Chun Hing Gay?"

Chun, kow-towin', poked 'is fingers in 'is  
sleeves and says, says he:

"Rather seven hundred devils than another  
wife fer me!"

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

"Wise physician," leered the goldsmith,  
"ye've been wed a dozen years—  
Tell me, where's yer honored children fer yer  
labor and yer tears?  
Many wives should be the portion of a  
wealthy man like you;  
And perhaps, ye'll deign to look upon my lit-  
tle gal, Lun Su,  
Fer 'er mouth is like a cherry and 'er foot is  
like a flower,  
And a thousand 'Frisco dollars go to make  
'er weddin'-dower."

"If I brought another woman to my house,"  
says Dr. Chun,  
"Say! My wife would vomit fireworks, like  
the Dragon of the Sun."  
Wing Lee's one eye twinkled knowledgeable.  
"Her sickness is a kind  
What deserves a patent medicine that's sooth-  
in' to the mind,  
What'll lay 'er calm and quiet like a lady  
ought to be—  
Fer a Wise Man loves 'is neighbors—and  
preserves tranquillity."

And that very afternoon the Doc got busy  
in 'is shop.

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

'Round the walls was herbs and powders,  
poison, sassafras, and hop,  
Pickled toads and dried-up lizards, powdered  
spiders, serpents' tails,  
Ginseng—good fer rheumatism—mustard,  
devil-weed, and snails;  
And the Doc was shavin' roots and mixin'  
powders wit' 'is knife—  
He was fixin' up a medicine to pacify 'is wife.

'Twasn't long before all Chinytown was  
noticin' the change.  
Dr. Chun Hing's house grew quiet—and the  
fact alone was strange.  
Mrs. Chun she lost ambition fer to racket and  
to row,  
And 'er eyes got dull and glassy and she didn't  
like 'er *chow*.  
Drunk wit' hop and shrunk and silly on 'er  
dirty bench she lay,  
Smoked 'er pipe and whispered nonsense to  
the greasy walls all day.

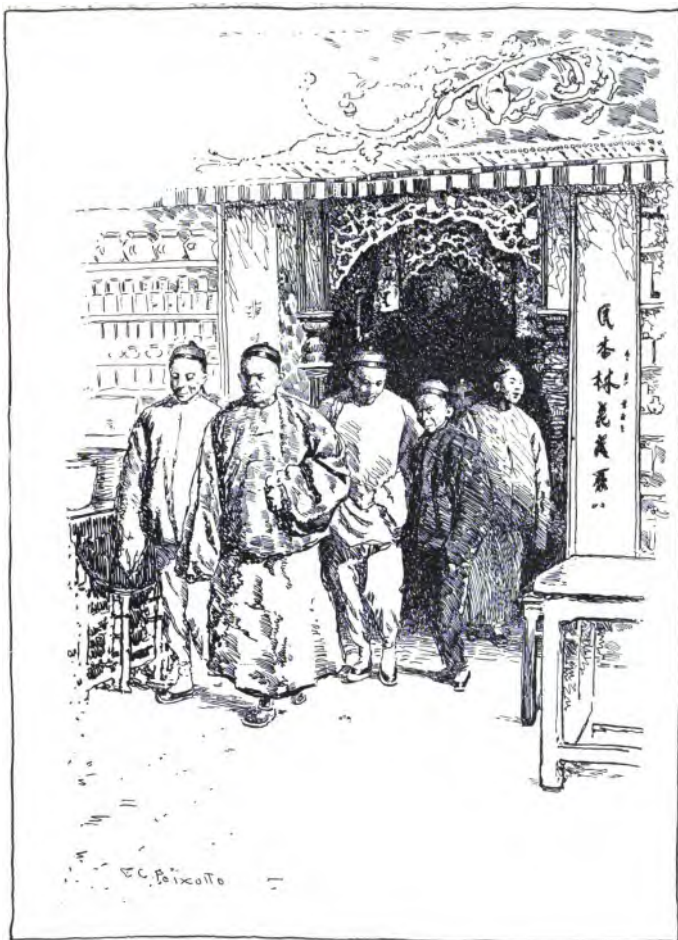
Dr. Chun was quite attentive—he had medi-  
cine to give—  
Waited patient as an idol till she hadn't long  
to live,

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

Then he signalled to the coolies that was  
workin' in 'is pay,  
And they rolled 'er in a blanket and they carried 'er away;  
Packed 'er down t'rough traps and cellars to  
the narrow, wooden stair  
Of the Chamber of Tranquillity. They  
knocked and left 'er there.

What, the Chamber of Tranquillity—ain't  
heard of it before?  
It's kind o' death-bed annex to an undertaker's  
store.  
In the Quarter when a Chinaman's about to  
pass away,  
Then he isn't wanted 'round the house—it  
brings bad luck, they say—  
So they chuck 'im in this quiet cell to breathe  
'is heathen last,  
Where the undertaker's handy—and ther  
ain't no questions ast.

Oh, the Chamber of Tranquillity is under-  
ground and cold,  
It hasn't got no windows and its walls is  
cracked and old;  
It hasn't got no pillows where a feeble head  
kin lie—



*"Say! the biggest bunch o' wickedness that ever walked in silk."*



### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

But a feller ain't pertickiller w'en he's about  
to die.

And the prayer that speeds the dyin' in that  
dark, ondecient shed

Is the pigtailed undertaker nailin' coffins over-  
head.

All day long the dyin' woman lay a-moanin'  
in the den.

Old Jim Mok, the undertaker, peeked in  
silent now and then

Jest to see if it was ready. In the Moon  
Flower restaurant

Dr. Chun, he gave a banquet which was all  
that heart could want.

'Twas a feast fer gods and devils, the occa-  
sion of 'is life,

To announce that Wing Lee's daughter was  
to be 'is second wife.

Late and early came the swellest merchant-  
kings o' Chinytown,

Red-hot, pigtailed sports, kow-towin' in ther  
robes o' green and brown;

And as in and out they waddled wit' the  
dignity o' beeves,

Ye could hear the gamblin'-money clinkin'  
gently in ther sleeves.

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

Eyes like agates, cheeks like ivory, and smiles  
as white as milk—  
Say! the biggest bunch o' wickedness that ever  
walked in silk!

All the tables was o' ebony, the chop-sticks  
tipped wit' jade.  
Chun was dressed in silk, embroidered, wit'  
a tassel in 'is braid.  
On the chairs was crimson cushions, in the  
walls wuz gilded flowers,  
And a gang o' hired musicians squeaked and  
banged wit' all ther powers.  
Forty merchants at the tables, and on stools  
about the room  
Forty little singin'-girls, as bright as parrots  
in ther plume.

There was everythin' in eatables from puppy-  
dog to rice;  
Nanking eggs aged forty summers—which  
the Chink considers nice—  
Bamboo-sprouts and chop-chop vittles, China  
pheasant from Shanghai,  
Bird's-nest dope which sounds like puddin',  
tastes like hell, and looks like pie.  
And the fiddles squalled and quavered and  
the gongs drowned out the strain.

### THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

And the Doctor smiled like Buddha as he  
ordered more champagne.

Old Wing Lee, skin-full o' bubbles, sat acrost  
from Dr. Chun,

And the two was swappin' maxims, stiff and  
solemn, one by one.

"Sayin' nothin'," says the goldsmith, "is a  
woman's rarest skill."

"Birds should sing," remarked the Doctor,  
"but a woman should be still."

"He who slumbers," says the goldsmith,  
"wit' an adder in 'is blouse

Is more happy than a husband wit' a wildcat  
in 'is house."

Chun was thinkin' up an answer, w'en a coolie  
shuffled in,

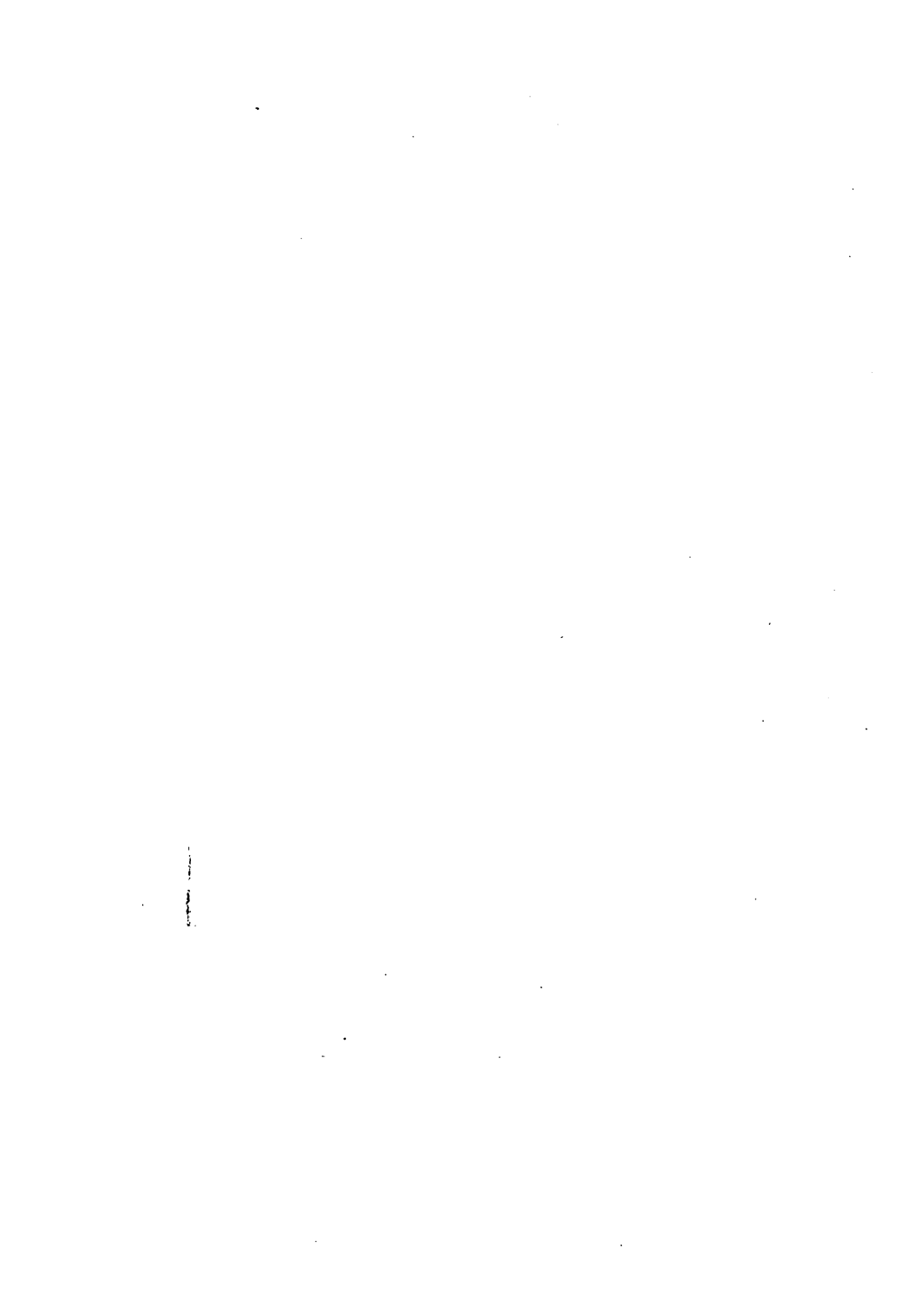
Came and stood beside the Doctor's chair and  
pulled a yeller grin,

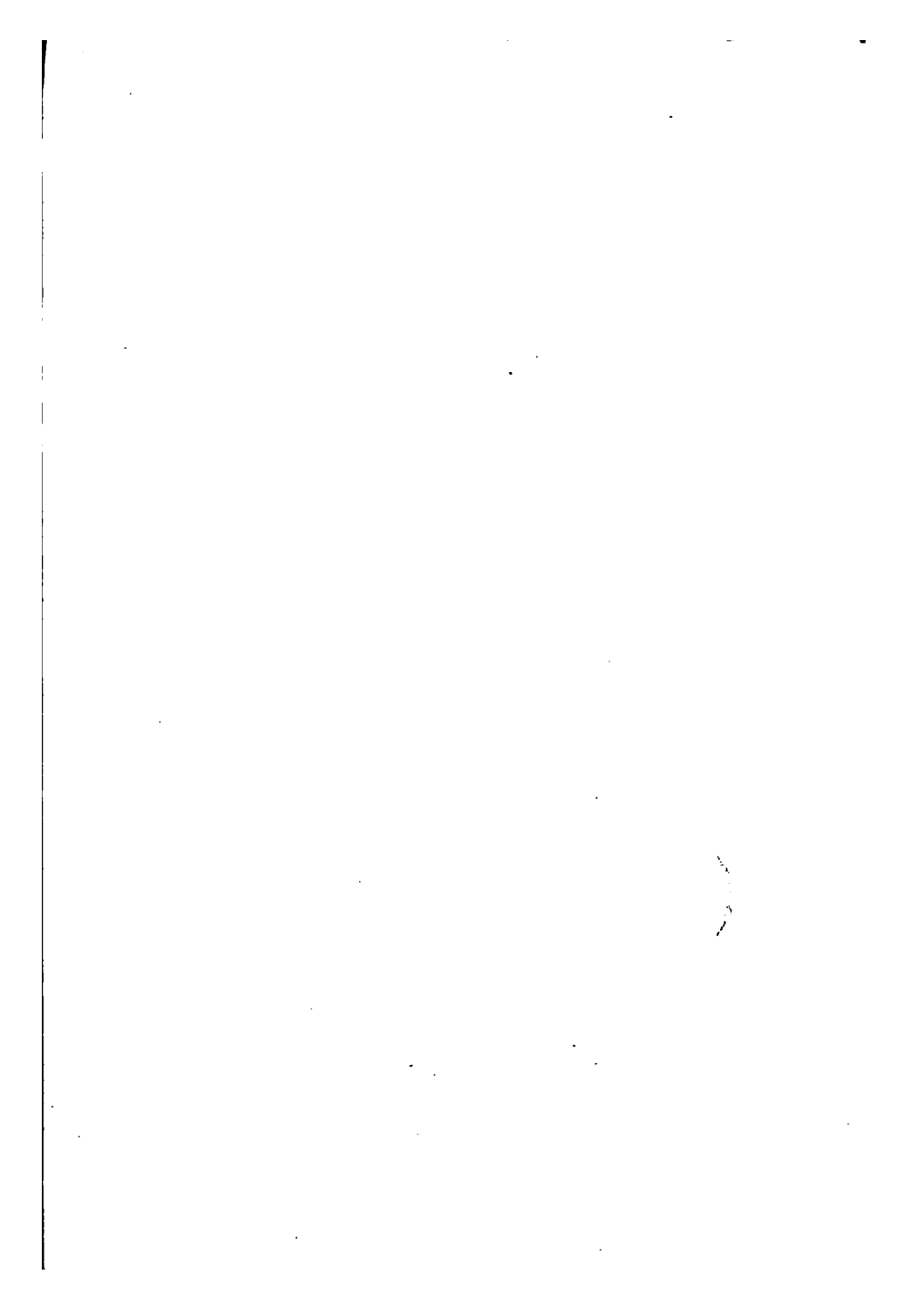
Then, a-leanin' confidential, closer to 'is ear  
he said:

"Jim Mok sent me fer the money. She has  
left the Chamber—dead."

Dr. Chun Hing Gay politely raised his glass  
to old Wing Lee:

"Lo! the Wise Man loves 'is neighbors—  
and preserves tranquillity."









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